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## Statement of Rep. Christopher Shays July 26, 2005

This hearing continues the Subcommittee's examination of security programs at Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear sites. Previous testimony described substantial institutional, technical and fiscal challenges confronting efforts to develop and implement a strengthened, post-9/11 security standard called the "Design Basis Threat" (or "DBT").

Today we focus on the substance and pace of DBT implementation at five sites, outside the active weapons complex, managed by the Department's Office of Energy, Science and Environment (ESE). Without question, ESE research labs and decommissioned sites are attractive targets for terrorists determined to turn our technology against us, and willing to die while doing so. The highly enriched uranium and plutonium held at these locations could be used as the core of an improvised nuclear device or dispersed as a radiological weapon. As DOE succeeds in hardening weapons production facilities and labs, ESE sites form the next tier of soft targets for nuclear terrorists following the path of least resistance.

But, as we've heard before, ESE facilities housing substantial quantities of nuclear materials face unique problems implementing and sustaining enhanced security programs. The already vexing measure of "How much security is enough against an uncertain threat?" becomes only more difficult when evaluating the costs and benefits of capital improvements and protective force enhancements at decommissioned facilities DOE hopes to close sooner than later.

At our request, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) assessed the current readiness of protective forces at ESE sites and the steps still needed to defend those facilities against the larger, more capable terrorist cells postulated in the DBT. Their findings, released today, point to a generally proficient guard staff prepared to meet existing standards.

But the way forward to meet the higher DBT threat level is far less clear. Efforts to deploy an elite protective force, utilize new security technologies and effectively manage ESE security initiatives require coordination and resource commitments that GAO is not sure will materialize. Plans to down-blend and consolidate nuclear materials appear stymied by bureaucratic stovepipes and uncertain cost projections. Even under the best assumptions, security enhancements demanded by the 2004 DBT will not be completed before 2008, if then.

The new security imperative demands implementation of a “denial strategy” to thwart access to nuclear materials, not just contain or catch intruders. But in many ways, ESE seems stuck in denial about the organizational and fiscal demands of a DBT-compliant strategy. Tactical training on assault scenarios lacks rigor and realism. Communications equipment may be unreliable. Exceptions to training and equipment standards create inconsistencies and gaps in ESE safeguard systems. A diffuse ESE security management structure frustrates efforts to implement and coordinate DOE-wide security policies.

Almost four years later, the undeniable realities of the post-9/11 world are not yet fully reflected in ESE security policies or practices. Our witnesses this morning will describe plans to implement the more stringent DBT and the steps needed to sustain those efforts against an undeniable, dynamic threat. We appreciate their contribution to our ongoing oversight of DOE nuclear security and we look forward to their testimony.